

## **Calling Areas**

Before you dial,  
know what the call will cost

**When it comes to your phone service,  
we know you have many questions.  
The State of Wisconsin's TeleWatch program  
will give you plain talk about  
your telephone service.**

It used to be simple: if you had to dial a 1 before the number, it was charged by the minute as a long distance call. If you dialed 7 digits, it was a “free” local call. To avoid unexpected charges on your phone bill, you should be aware of the increasing exceptions to this rule.

Calls may be charged differently depending on which type of call you are making: local, extended area service (EAS), extended community calling (ECC), local toll (also called local long distance, or intraLATA), and long distance (also called interLATA), or state-to-state.

### **Local Service**

Local service refers to calls placed to other customers in the caller's exchange. The exchange is the basic building block of telephone service and exchange boundaries do not correspond with city, county, postal addresses or other boundaries. Local service facilities in an exchange extend from the central office (the wire center) over feeder cable and distribution wires to homes and businesses in the urban area and outlying rural areas.

#### **How are local calls charged?**

Many companies charge a flat monthly rate, no matter how many local calls you make or how long you talk. Other companies charge a combination of a flat rate and a charge per call. Companies are currently prohibited from charging per-minute for local calls within your exchange.

#### **Why don't exchange boundaries match city or county boundaries?**

In the early days of telephone service, switches were generally located in cities or villages. Exchange boundaries were established by extending lines to connect customers in all directions from the switch until they encountered customers receiving service from the opposite direction. In many rural areas, groups of farmers constructed their own lines between their farms and connected with the chosen telephone company at an agreed-upon point.

### **Extended Area Service (EAS)**

Extended Area Service (EAS) is a form of local service for calls between neighboring or nearby exchanges. EAS is provided by your local telephone company and the cost is usually included in the charge for local service. Some companies, however, have a separate, flat monthly EAS charge. Some companies charge for EAS calls on a per-call or per-minute basis, and some offer a choice between a measured and a flat rate option.

EAS was first introduced in the 1940's to recognize growing interest in calling between exchanges. EAS expanded through the 1950s and 1960s, but there has been little change since 1970.

### **How can I request that EAS be expanded?**

Customers may petition the Public Service Commission for service to additional EAS exchanges. The petition should be signed by at least 10 percent of the customers of one of the affected exchanges. If EAS is expanded, the rate for basic service will likely go up. To find out more about procedures for submitting an EAS petition, call the PSC at the number listed at the end of this brochure.

### **Extended Community Calling (ECC)**

Although ECC calls are provided by the local telephone company, the rate for ECC is a per-minute charge. The ECC charge is lower than most long distance charges. The rate for ECC varies by company between 3.4 and 8 cents per minute, with 5 cents per minute being a common charge. These rates are subject to change the same way other local rates may be changed.

ECC was authorized by the Public Service Commission starting in 1993 to promote uniformity of local calling areas. The purpose of ECC is to make local calling coverage more uniform throughout the state. With ECC, the vast majority of customers now have local calling service that includes calling to their county seat and schools. Prior to ECC's introduction, these were frequently not covered by local calling for customers in rural areas.

With ECC, certain calls that were previously considered long distance are now local. ECC is provided between exchanges that are either adjacent to or near each other, that are not already covered by EAS. ECC only applies to calls within Local Access and Transport Areas (LATA).

### **What is the difference between ECC and EAS?**

For most telephone companies, EAS is provided as unlimited calling included in the monthly rate for local service. In some cases this may be one of the available options for local service. For other companies, including SBC, EAS is priced on a per-call basis. ECC calls are typically priced on a per-minute basis.

### **How do I know if I'm calling a local or ECC number?**

You can't count on the old rule that a 7-digit call is local. Some 7-digit calls are charged from 3.4 to 8 cents per minute as ECC or EAS. Some local calls now require you to dial the area code, even though they are charged per-call or included in the flat monthly rate. For example, calls into Milwaukee County from surrounding areas require you to dial the area code even though such calls may be local. Check your telephone book or call your local phone company. SBC customers can look up their calling area on the internet at [www.ameritech.com/lca](http://www.ameritech.com/lca).

### **Local toll (also called local long distance or intraLATA) service**

Local toll refers to calls outside of your local calling area, but within your Local Access and Transport Area (LATA). Most of Wisconsin is divided into four LATAs as shown on the following map. These calls are also referred to as local toll, or intraLATA. A call from Madison to La Crosse is an example. Customers now have a choice of companies for these calls.

### **Long distance service**

Long distance, or interLATA service refers to calls which cross LATA boundaries. Calls from Eau Claire to Wausau or Milwaukee to Madison are examples, as are almost all calls to another state. For these calls, customers are able to choose their preferred long distance company. While the 608 area code covers the same section of the state as the Southwest LATA, other area codes do not match LATA boundaries. Some long distance companies charge different rates for state-to-state calls, interLATA calls within the state, and local toll calls. Many advertisements only quote rates for state-to-state calls.

## Wisconsin Local Access and Transportation Areas (LATAs)



The state is divided into four Local Access and Transport Areas, or LATAs, shown in the map. You have different choices for calls within your LATA than for calls that cross LATA boundaries.

## Who can help?

**The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin** is the state agency that oversees the telephone industry. Most local and in-state telephone billing and service complaints may be directed to the PSC. Call or write to:

P.O. Box 7854  
Madison, WI 53707-7854  
(800) 225-7729 (800-CAL-PSCW)  
TTY (608) 267-1479  
Fax (608) 266-3957  
E-Mail: [pscsecs@psc.state.wi.us](mailto:pscsecs@psc.state.wi.us)  
<http://psc.wi.gov>

The **Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection** mediates and investigates telecommunications complaints, including those regarding mail and phone solicitations, deceptive and misleading marketing, and long distance rate changes. Call or write to:

P.O. Box 8911  
Madison, WI 53708-8911  
(800) 422-7128  
TTY (608) 224-5058  
Fax (608) 224-4939  
E-Mail: [datcpholine@datcp.state.wi.us](mailto:datcpholine@datcp.state.wi.us)  
<http://datcp.state.wi.us>

**The Wisconsin Department of Justice** enforces state law, including telecommunications. Write to them at:

123 West Washington Ave.  
P.O. Box 7857  
Madison, WI 53707-7857  
[www.doj.state.wi.us](http://www.doj.state.wi.us)

**The Federal Communications Commission** is the federal agency that oversees the telecommunications industry. Call or write to:

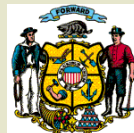
Consumer Protection Branch  
Common Carrier Bureau  
445 12th St., SW  
Washington, DC 20554  
Toll-free (888) 225-5322 (888-CALL FCC)  
Toll-free TTY  
(888) 835-5322 (888-TELL FCC)  
[www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov)

## Bilingual service / Servicio Bilingüe

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is also able to provide customer assistance in Spanish. When calling the PSC, please ask to speak to a Spanish speaking representative.

En la Comisión de Servicios Públicos del estado de Wisconsin (PSC) podemos asistirles en español. Cuando llame a la PSC, pida hablar con un representante de habla hispana.

**The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the provision of programs, services, or employment. If you are speech hearing, or visually impaired and need assistance, call (608) 262-8524 or TTY (608) 267-1479. We will try to find another way to get the information to you in usable form.**



This brochure was produced jointly by the WI Public Service Commission, the WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, and the WI Department of Justice.